

Comprehensive Plan Committee

Regular Meeting

Monday, September 15, 2014 3:00 pm – 5:00 pm

Northern Arizona Center for Entrepreneurship and Technology (NACET)
2225 N. Gemini Drive, Flagstaff, AZ 86001 (928) 213-9234

Minutes

Focus on Sustainability Element

*Approved without correction by CPC
on Oct. 30, 2014*

CPC Members Present:

Geoff Barnard	Leo Gishie	Judy Prosser
Bill Cordasco	Wendell Johnson	John Ruggles
Jim Corning	David McKee	Maggie Sacher
Patty Garcia	Jamie Neilson	Don Walters

Core Planning Team Members Present:

Jay Christelman, Director of Community Development
John Aber, Assistant Director
Jeanne Trupiano, Principal Planner
Bob Short, Senior Planner
Zach Schwartz, Planner
Kate Morley, Planner
Amanda Acheson, Sustainable Building Program Manager
Hannah R. Griscom, Urban Wildlife Planner, Arizona Game and Fish Department and Coconino County

1. Welcome and Introductions

Jeanne Trupiano called the meeting to order at 3:05pm. She introduced Jay Christelman, Community Development Director to make a few comments.

Mr. Christelman welcomed the Comprehensive Plan Committee (CPC) and thanked everyone for coming. He reminded the group that part of the task at hand is to create a Comprehensive Plan that is consistent with Community Development's Mission Statement. He then read the Mission Statement so that the group could keep those parameters in mind during the meeting.

Ms. Trupiano continued, beginning the process for everyone in the room to introduce themselves. She then asked the CPC if they could agree that the September 25 meeting should be extended by 30 minutes to 5:30PM because the topic of Economic Development will need extensive presentations and discussion. The CPC unanimously agreed, though Laura Huenneke and Maggie Sacher noted that they would not be able to attend because of scheduling conflicts.

2. Planning Team Update

Ms. Trupiano explained that she would be updating the Board of Supervisors at a work session that was open to the public on the 16th. Also, that the Science Advisory Group (SAG) will be meeting on Friday the 19th of September and again on October 24 when they will cover weed management issues.

3. Discussion on the development of the Sustainability Element with an Assessment of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Challenges (SWOC)

Amanda Acheson then started a PowerPoint presentation on Sustainability. She explained that the existing Plan has many elements of sustainability built in. She added that there are certain parts like climate change and adaptation that are not included. Ms. Acheson stated that this element will be a tool for integrating the other elements of the Plan. She explained that the County could use the STAR Communities Guiding Principles, a governmentally created certification system that gauges the sustainability ratings of government agencies. The 7 goals of the STAR Communities system were read and it was explained that there were 44 different objectives within those categories. This model could be used to develop the goals and policies of the County's Sustainability Element. Ms. Acheson went on to mention that the City of Tucson had the STAR Communities certification and that they were nationally recognized for having a very high rating within the system. Ms. Acheson explained that staff had created a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Challenges (SWOC) Analysis to identify and critique the current level of sustainability in the existing Plan. The SWOC revealed that there was room for developing new topics within the Sustainability Element and additions could be made to the Conservation Guidelines.

Ms. Acheson explained that certain strengths listed in the SWOC surpass state statute requirements. Weaknesses included the lack of mitigation approaches, the need for updates for water resource issues, and the need for improvement of the maps and graphics, etc. Opportunities gave examples of how the Plan could become more adaptable and take a lifecycle approach. Challenges included integrating the new element without redundancy, having a 'rural model' for sustainability (because sustainability is often focused on more urban areas), having consensus on what are the best sustainability approaches, and how to apply conservation guidelines to the human side.

Ms. Acheson then asked the CPC if they had any comments to add to the Core Planning Team SWOC that she had just presented.

Wendell Johnson asked what was meant by the 'social aspect' of sustainability.

Ms. Acheson stated that it has to do with how the environment affects the way that people live, both in health and happiness.

Geoff Barnard asked what the slide meant as far as how certain social sustainable items fit into the conservation guidelines.

Ms. Acheson and Ms. Trupiano explained that the references to the Conservation Guidelines illustrate where certain sustainability items would fit into the existing Guidelines of the Plan and how they could be integrated together to make new goals and policies exclusively for the Sustainability Element.

Ms. Acheson then asked again if there was anything missing?

Ms. Sacher explained that under the opportunities we could add the ability to use the information from the corridor management plan at Marble Canyon.

Mr. Barnard pointed out that the limitations set by statute limiting the amount through which we can regulate certain things might be a challenge.

Mr. McKee explained that perhaps we need to go above and beyond the state in our regulation of water resources.

Laura Huenneke suggested that there is the challenge of taking into consideration the scale of the County as a whole, because it is so large and diverse of an environment, especially considering the lack of certain resources in certain parts of the County.

Ms. Acheson went on to discuss the economic sustainability subsection. She went on to point out the existing principles in the Plan and how staff's new ideas about economic sustainability could be integrated into those ideas for the update. The staff SWOC also brought to light some of the topics missing in regards to sustainability in the currently adopted Plan. These included targeted industry development, reduction of waste stream materials, natural assets and limitations, and other aspects of sustainability.

Following the discussion of the SWOC, Ms. Acheson began consideration of the definition of 'sustainability'.

Mr. Barnard thought that it was important to note the limitations on sustainability set by State Statute, E.G. the state does not recognize the connection between surface water and groundwater.

Ms. Huenneke noted that infrastructure limitations in rural parts of the County could be considered a weakness.

Ms. Acheson asked the group what they thought sustainability looks like in a rural community. She asked that the group frame the discussion on the three 'pillars' of sustainability: Economy, Environment, and Social.

Bill Cordasco asked if the term 'sustainability' is actually a process or not, because he felt that there were some differences in the way that the term had been used.

Mr. Barnard agreed, stating that he thought that the definition was basically being used to explain itself and that it was a circular idea. He also wanted to know if technology would be addressed in it, and noted that there was a recent issue at NAU related to technological sustainability.

Mr. Johnson stated to the group that he thought that when regulations were not broad enough that it could cause problems in the future and warned the group that the Sustainability Element should be broad enough to encompass evolving technology.

Ms. Huenneke proposed that sustainability might be thought of as a way to preserve options for future opportunities. She also proposed that sustainability might be thought of as making current decisions that would not compromise future ability to thrive.

Ms. Griscom explained that access to internet even in rural environments could also be part of the social sustainability and equal access to certain services

Mr. Corning asked if the availability of internet is something that the County can provide or not, as maybe then it isn't appropriate in the Plan.

Ms. Acheson explained that what we can do is make goals and policies that nurture it.

Wendell Johnson stated that we can use the Plan to make the zoning much easier to provide for the infrastructure.

Ms. Huenneke stated that preserving options for future economic activities is a crucial part of economic sustainability. She stated that earmarking certain resources for things that might break down in the future would not be a sustainable economically.

Leo Gishie stated that he wasn't sure about how the economic sustainability worked. He noted that he had tried to start some activities at the county fair and that it was difficult, noting that horsemanship types of activities should be encouraged.

Ms. Acheson stated that that specific issue could fit into several different aspects of sustainability, both economic, social, and integration of the three legs all together.

Ms. Sacher stated that if broadband was part of a goal for sustainable infrastructure, that also landlines should be addressed because it makes it hard for some of the more rural areas to compete with those that are closer to urban areas. She stated that the different areas within the County could be addressed in a different way as far as requirements in order to help with economic sustainability for businesses to be more competitive in rural areas.

Ms. Griscom was hoping for expansion on the proposed organization of the sustainability element. She had assumed from previous staff meetings that elements already existing dealing with sustainability in the Comp Plan would be more general and just connecting all of the ideas together.

Mr. Cordasco thought that the environmental aspect should be put first.

Ms. Acheson went through the specific items that staff had brought up relating the environmental sustainable issue. She asked the group had any other ideas.

Jamie Neilson wanted to add to riparian issues to this section, and asked if the conservation guidelines included this.

Ms. Trupiano said that they were not, and that the Core Planning Team will note that for addition above and beyond what staff had already come up with.

Ms. Griscom wanted to see an ecosystem services element to the environmental sustainability issue.

Mr. Ruggles mentioned that an ecosystem services portion related to environmental sustainability would help the Planning and Zoning Commission make better informed land use decisions.

Ms. Sacher wanted to see connectivity and open space added to this section.

Ms. Griscom asked what Ms. Sacher meant by connectivity.

Ms. Sacher explained that in certain subdivisions and similar types of developments, there should be requirements for wildlife connections.

David McKee added that 'migration corridors' was the idea that the group was alluding to, and he stated that he thought that that was already addressed. He did, however, think that this could be broadly discussed in the environmental sustainability section.

Ms. Huenneke thought that landscaping interactions with disease was an important topic to cover.

Mr. Barnard stated that no mention of restoration was used in the Plan as a specific term.

Mr. Cordasco asked if 'capacity' and 'utilization' were appropriate terms for this subsection of the sustainability section.

Ms. Acheson and Ms. Trupiano explained that these ideas were certainly part of the subsection.

Mr. McKee explained that the Diablo Trust document explained and expanded on these ideas fairly well.

Ms. Acheson went on to explain the social sustainability subsection and different aspects and topics involved with that subsection. She asked the group if they had any comments to add.

Mr. Johnson asked what ‘connectivity’ and ‘equity’ meant in this context.

Ms. Acheson explained that part of the idea that was already explained earlier in the group discussion, that all of the communities in the County should have the same access to telecommunication and other connectivity such as communications.

Mr. Johnson thought that connectivity and equity should be considered differently in different areas because some of the more rural areas may not even want to have these. He went on to explain that possibly the regulations should be different in different areas in a few different tiers with different levels of minimum requirements. He asked Jay Christelman if this was the general way that he thought about it.

Mr. Christelman explained that revisions to the Zoning Ordinance revisions could consider these ideas.

Mr. Ruggles explained that there cannot be ‘equity’ if the infrastructure is not equal. He used examples throughout the County and stated that some of the discussion before related to isolation and how that can be a barrier to some of the goals that seem to be mentioned in the currently adopted Plan and in the group’s discussion for the meeting. Interconnection, he explained, does not necessarily detract from individual character of specific areas.

Ms. Acheson expressed her enthusiasm of how well she thought the discussion was going, and that the Comp Plan update will not only inform the Ordinance, but also the Area Plans

Mr. McKee explained that there should be some sort of analysis of what the ‘tipping point’ is and what we are capable of addressing through capacity.

Ms. Griscom explained that the water resources section has to be addressed in this manner regarding supply and demand by statute, though County government has very little ability to do anything about it.

Short Break

4. Continued Discussion and Action on Sustainability Element

The group reconvened at 4:15pm. Ms. Acheson wanted to explain what staff’s ideas on the term ‘sustainability’ and get the group’s ideas on the term.

Mr. Ruggles stated that we should be keeping it as simple as possible and that he liked what staff had added.

Mr. Corning stated that the United Nations definition was a good one and that this was very close.

Ms. Acheson explained that this was a little more concise of a UN definition that was used before.

Ms. Sacher wanted to make sure that every single time that ‘sustainability’ was used it should be used exactly as that definition had stated. She stated that she thought that sometimes ‘sustainability’ was used in different ways in certain aspects, but that the Comprehensive Plan should not.

Ms. Huenneke stated that having ‘interconnected’ and ‘systems’ were similar words and that maybe both shouldn’t be there.

Ms. Acheson explained that the three tiers were almost like different systems that are also integrated, not just a redundancy in the explanation. She stated that she was open to reworking the definition.

Ms. Griscom stated that she thought ‘current and future needs’ was redundant if there was also the working ‘long-term resiliency’

Mr. Ruggles admitted that it was possibly redundant, but maybe being redundant on that point was not such a bad idea in order to make emphasis.

Discussion ensued over the following definition, “Sustainability is an interconnected systems approach for balancing current and future needs with regards to long-term resiliency and vitality of the environment, economy and society.”

Following a good discussion that led to the deletion of the ‘long-term’, the following definition was agreed upon:

Sustainability is an interconnected systems approach for balancing current and future needs with regards to resiliency and vitality of the environment, economy and society.

Ms. Acheson then shifted the presentation over to Kate Morley to cover the goals and policies section.

Ms. Morley reiterated that the integration and broadness was part of the thought process for this section of the Comprehensive Plan. She asked the group to read the two goals and the four policies briefly to see if staff was on the right track as far as what the group felt was okay. She also read them aloud, starting with the goals.

Ms. Sacher stated that she thought she preferred the second goal.

Mr. Johnson stated that he thought that he preferred the first goal as stated.

Mr. Corning added that the first goal was the best, stating that having just the county would not be inclusive enough.

Ms. Neilson added that there should be one goal that incorporates and supports integrating the principles of sustainability in future land use and development plans.

Mr. Cordasco added that the definition of sustainability already included resiliency.

Ms. Prosser added that the ‘actions of elected and appointed officials’ and ‘future land use and development plans’ should be added in the goals.

Mr. McKee added that the use of ‘actions of elected and appointed officials’ was redundant because that is how the entire plan should be used.

Mr. Ruggles agreed that pointing to the appointed and elected officials should be in as it relates specifically to sustainability.

Ms. Sacher suggested adding ‘staff’ to the groups to keep in mind sustainability during the decisions making process that often includes staff members.

Mr. Walters thought that nobody should be specifically be mentioned, as the users of the plan are already known.

Ms. Morley then read the policies. She asked if we were missing anything or if something should be taken out.

Mr. Walters explained that private property rights should be included in there and others in the group agreed.

Mr. Cordasco added that after resiliency there should be a reference to vitality.

Mr. Corning added that the 'promote social and environmental justice through the fair allocation of resources' sounded good but wasn't sure what it meant.

Ms. Sacher explained that this might become an issue of contention, as it may cause strife between people who thought that this was not 'fair'.

Ms. Huenneke explained that possibly this was redundant and the first one addressed it so maybe that more specific one could be removed so as not to cause contention.

Ms. Huenneke thought that there might need to be more discussion of cultural resources in the social sustainability section. She thought that maybe 'for the benefit of the whole' should be gotten rid of because the different individual parts should be sustained rather than the whole.

Mr. Cordasco explained that he thought that for the first time the benefit of the diverse different individual elements in the County idea was brought up rather than a completely holistic look, and he really liked this idea. The health of the diversity he thought was a great new idea and wanted to focus on it.

Mr. Gishie brought up the Regional Plan and wanted to know how the Regional Plan and the Comprehensive Plan worked together.

Kate Morley explained that the Regional Plan encompassed the City and a slightly larger area with parts of the County. She stated that the County focuses mostly on what is in the Coconino County Comprehensive Plan rather than the Regional Plan, though consistency between the two is definitely important.

Mr. Johnson asked about the third proposed policy where the three bottom lines of sustainability (social, environmental and economic) were thought of equally. He wanted to group to think about how that was worded and if it is right.

Mr. Cordasco stated that he thought that they should all be kept in mind, but not equally. Rather, all should be kept in mind at the same time and the best decision met by keeping them all in mind.

Ms. Prosser asked about the STAR Communities program and wanted to know about the standards because she wasn't if they were a good fit for the County.

Ms. Huenneke thought that we should keep them in mind as well as other national standards as we progress and try to be sustainable.

Mr. Ruggles stated that we shouldn't commit to any of the specific standards, but rather try to do our best with all of them.

Ms. Acheson wanted to state that she was so happy that the diversity approach. Amanda wanted to continue to get deeper into the idea of the diversity of the County.

5. CPC Member Roundtable

There was no discussion

6. Set next meeting, homework assignments and wrap-up.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:10 pm. The next regular meeting was set for September 25 at NACET.

Notes:

What does it mean to include social factors? Human activity and adaptability—

Opportunity: Corridor Management Funds (Federal Highways) for Marble Canyon

Weakness/Opportunity: State statutes limit moving forward with sustainability principles.

Opportunity: County moves ahead of State on policies to protect water resources.

For example:

- Water issues regarding the connection between surface and groundwater.
- Address broad differences between the communities across the County related to infrastructure and services.

Sustainability Element Contents:

Economic Section: Increase broadband, web-based infrastructure, keep expectations general yet flexible to allow for best products or practices, retain the ability to explore options for future economic uses, e.g., conservation of groundwater and landscapes.

Suggestions for needs in the rural areas for economic development:

- Rural area land lines (phone)
- Three-phase power
- Overnight package delivery

Consider how the zoning ordinances are applied throughout the County and evaluate the exurban vs. rural areas of the County.

Environment Section: What is a sustainable environment? What are the factors to consider?

- Add riparian
- Add ecosystem services
- Consider environmental sensitivity
- Add connectivity for people and animals
- Add landscape interactions with disease along with restoring ecosystem function
- Consider capacity and utilization.
- Consider community equity—do we need to have access to services and infrastructure to all areas of the County?
- Consider that different areas of the County may retain levels of service specific to local conditions/character that are linked to performance standards in the Zoning Ordinance.
- Consider that each area could build as much equity as possible depending on the location.

Social Section: What is this section about? Can it be explained as an analysis of how impacts from land use and resource allocation affect people and their daily lives?

- Consider the effects of human migration patterns and how they change over time?
- Consider 7 Generation Thinking to incorporate questions such as who will the future residents be?
- Consider health factors as well as environmental health to support social sustainability.

Sustainability Defined: **“Sustainability is an interconnected systems approach for balancing current and future needs with regards to resiliency and vitality of the environment, economy and society.”**

- Slide definition (as shown above) agreed on by CPC
- Be consistent within the Plan to refer back to the agreed upon definition
- Retain interconnected systems approach

Goal and Policies:

- 1. Goal: Incorporate and support integrated, long-term, seven generations thinking into all actions and decisions made by elected and appointed officials.**
or
- 2. Goal: Make decisions that require the County to take a leadership role in integrating the principles of sustainability in future land use and development plans.**

- What will sustainable performance standards look like for development projects?
- Requiring the County to take on a leadership role on private property may be too far.
- Combine goal statements
- Incorporate and support integrated principles of sustainability in future land use and development plans or decisions of elected and appointed officials.
- Include staff, elected and appointed
- Add the protection of private property rights to the policies
- Consider resiliency and vitality
- Delete reference to the promotion of social and environmental justice and allocation
- Delete for the benefit of the whole
- Highlight diversity of all aspects of the County to include geographic, cultural and the communities
- Recognize the worth of this diversity
- Stay aware of the state and national standards—not necessarily adhering but retaining recognition and awareness
- Explain what sustainability looks like in our County.